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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 003217

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: (C) DEFEATED ISLAMIST OFFERS VIEWS ON KUWAITI POLITICS

REF: KUWAIT 2992

Classified By: ADCM John G. Moran for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

[11.](#) (C) Summary: The Ambassador and Poloff visited ex-MP and unabashed Islamist Mubarak Al-Dowailah on July 16. During an unusually candid conversation, Dowailah offered his views on his defeat, the new government, the future of Islamism in the upcoming National Assembly, and the prospect of established political parties in Kuwait. End Summary.

Allegations of GOK vote buying and ballot tampering

[12.](#) (C) The Ambassador and Poloff visited defeated Islamic Constitutional Movement (ICM) MP, Mubarak al-Dowailah in the office of his engineering firm on July 16. (Note: Dowailah is the owner of a large engineering firm responsible for the design and construction of some of the most modern buildings in Kuwait. End Note.) Reeling from an unexpected political defeat, Dowailah said he had no doubt that pro-government forces were behind the upset of both himself and his former colleague, Mubarak al-Khrainej, both of whom represented Omariya, the 16th of Kuwait, s 25 political constituencies. Dowailah claims the GOK allocated KD 500,000 (roughly \$1.5 million) to the would-be winners of the constituency, current MP's Daifallah Buramiya and Mohammed al-Faji, for use in buying votes to ensure Dowailah was not returned to office. He said the pro-government candidates had not intended to unseat al-Khrainej, but had miscalculated their vote buying and vote trading by about 100 votes, which led to Khrainej's ouster. (Note: Kuwait's National Assembly seats ) 2 per district ) go to the top two voter getters. End Note.) In addition, Dowailah explained in detail his much-publicized allegation of vote tampering. During the elections, he said, the polling station had been closed for two hours, a period in which the keys to the polling station had been handed to either Kuwaiti police or members of the Kuwait State Security (KSS) forces. Although Dowailah's brother has filed a petition contesting the elections, Dowailah, a member of the National Assembly since before the occupation of Kuwait, indicated he would sit the next four years out. "I, ll have a good chance in the next elections," he said, adding that he intends to stay active in the political arena by writing a regular column in one of the local newspapers.

ICM Electoral Losses Huge; Islamists not so successful

[13.](#) (C) Contrary to reports by western news agencies, the election appears not to have been such a windfall for Islamists. For example, all eleven of the candidates supported by the ICM were soundly defeated, and ICM's numbers in the National Assembly fell from six to two. When asked by the Ambassador the extent to which Islamists were now united, Dowailah offered only that the ICM had held a seven hour meeting the previous night in which the movement had fired every one of its political section employees ) hardly a resounding indication of unity in the Islamist camp. That said, Dowailah explained that Islamists now view themselves as the only opposition group in the new National Assembly, and they may form new battle lines with this in mind.

The New Cabinet

[14.](#) (C) Dowailah characterized the new government as "weak," and noted that the de-linking of the Crown Price post from that of Prime Minister has made it easier for MP,s to attack Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah. Despite including a number of "strong" ministers, e.g. Minister of Commerce Abdullah Taweel, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah, Minister of Energy, Shaykh Ahmed Fahad and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, Abdullah Matouq, Dowailah said the cabinet was "not strong enough to face Parliament," indicating we can expect further parliamentary grillings. In particular, Dowailah slammed Minister of Interior, Shaykh Nawaf al-Ahmed al-Sabah as "too weak" and a minister "unwilling to play politics." Also in his sights were Minister of Defense Shaykh Jaber Mubarak, for pandering to the wishes of MP's by approving too many requests for expensive military health services for unqualified beneficiaries, and Minister of Information, Mohammed Abulhassan, whom he warned had used "sensitive" language when he had called for additional press freedom.

#### Losses tied to call for Political Parties

15. (C) Reflecting upon the overall reasons for Islamist losses, Dowailah said the ICM had overextended itself when it had called for political parties in its platform. He said that Kuwaitis do not like the term 'party,' which they associate with the pan-arabists such as the Ba'ath, although they accept that various parliamentary blocs are de-facto parties. "Actually, we are parties," Dowailah said, "which is much better for democracy."

16. (C) Comment: Dowailah's parting comments about Islamist losses point to an oft-overlooked fact: Islamists are sometimes genuine reformers, whose goals (at least, in the short-run) may coincide with ours. Although one may question the motives of a group which frequently finds itself in the political minority, the ICM's platform did indeed call for the adoption of a more modern, transparent political system through the formalization of political parties. While many Islamists views are at odds with us, we should not automatically paint them all with the same brush.

JONES